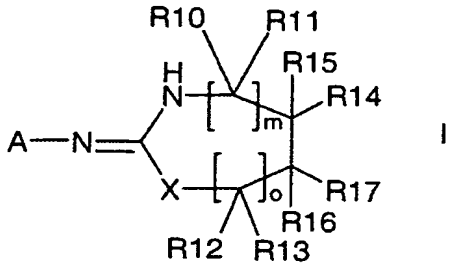
What is claimed is:

1. A process for preparing heterocycles of formula I



I

wherein:

X is sulfur, oxygen or NR5

wherein R5 is hydrogen or (C1-C4)alkyl;

m and o are each independently zero, 1 or 2;

A is either a) phenyl, naphthyl or heteroaryl, each of which is optionally substituted by 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 R11 radicals

wherein R11 is, in each case, independently selected from the group consisting of (C1-C4)alkyl, F, Cl, Br, I, CN, NO_2, OH, O(C1-C4)alkyl, and COO(C1-C4)alkyl, and some or all of the hydrogen atoms of the alkyl radicals may be replaced by fluorine atoms;

or b) selected from(C1-C4)alkyl, (C2-C5)alkenyl, (C2-C5)alkynyl, (C3-C8)cycloalkyl, and (C4-C8)cycloalkenyl radicals

wherein said radicals may each independently be substituted by (C1-C4)alkyl or (C3-C6)cycloalkyl, and

wherein some or all of the hydrogen atoms of the alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl and cycloalkenyl radicals may be replaced by fluorine atoms;

R14, R15, R16 and R17

are each independently selected from hydrogen, F and (C1-C4)alkyl,

wherein some or all of the hydrogen atoms of the alkyl radicals may be replaced by fluorine atoms;

or

R14 and R16 together are a bond, and

R15 and R17, together with the two carbon atoms to which they are bonded, form an aromatic six-membered carbocycle, in which one or two carbon atoms may be replaced by nitrogen, or a thiophene ring,

wherein the aromatic six-membered carbocycle and the thiophene ring is optionally substituted by 1, 2, 3 or 4 R7 radicals,

wherein R7 is, in each case, independently selected from the group consisting of (C1-C4)alkyl, F, Cl, Br, I, CN, NO_2, OH, O(C1-C4)-alkyl and COO(C1-C4)alkyl, and some or all of the hydrogen atoms of the alkyl radicals may be replaced by fluorine atoms;

or

R14 and R16 are each independently hydrogen or (C1-C4)alkyl,

wherein some or all of the hydrogen atoms of the alkyl radicals may be replaced by fluorine atoms;

and

R15 and R17, together with the two carbon atoms to which they are bonded, form a saturated 5-, 6-, 7- or 8-membered carbocycle in which one or two carbon atoms may each independently be replaced by O, S, NH or N(C1-C4)alkyl and may be substituted by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 R8 radicals

wherein R8 is, in each case, independently selected from the group consisting of (C1-C4)alkyl, O(C1-C4)alkyl, and COO(C1-C4)alkyl, and some or all of the hydrogen atoms of the alkyl radicals may be replaced by fluorine atoms;

R10, R11, R12 and R13

are each independently hydrogen, F or (C1-C4)alkyl,

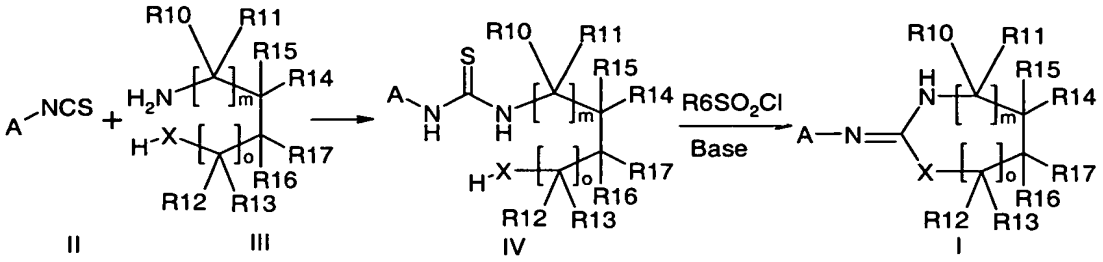
wherein some or all of the hydrogen atoms of the alkyl radicals may be replaced by fluorine atoms;

wherein, either (i) A is an aromatic ring system, or (ii) the ring formed from R15 and R17 is an aromatic system and m is zero, or (iii) each of A and the ring formed from R15 and R17 is an aromatic ring system;

and their tautomers and their salts;

provided, however, that compounds in which A is unsubstituted phenyl or (C1-C4)alkyl; and X is oxygen; and R14 and R15 are each independently hydrogen, (C1-C4)alkyl or benzyl; and R16 and R17 are each hydrogen; and m and o are each zero are excluded;

which process comprises, as shown in scheme 1,



Scheme 1

a) reacting an isothiocyanate of formula II with a primary amine of formula III to give a thiourea of formula IV, and

b) converting the thiourea of formula IV, using a sulfonyl chloride $R6SO_2Cl$ in the presence of a base, to said compound of formula I,

where, in the compounds of the formulae II, III and IV,

A, X, n, m and R10 to R17 are each as defined in formula I and

R6 is (C1-C4)alkyl, trifluoromethyl or phenyl which is unsubstituted or substituted by methyl, trifluoromethyl, F, Cl, Br or a polymeric support.

2. The process of claim 1, in which the reaction is carried out as a one-pot reaction.

3. The process of claim 1, wherein steps a) and b) are each independently conducted continuously or batchwise.

4. The process of claim 1, wherein X is oxygen or NR5.

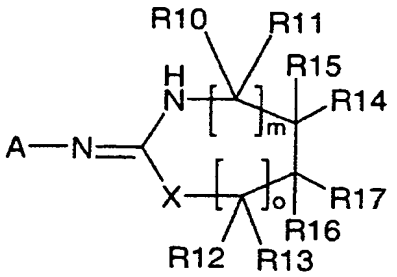
5. The process of claim 1, wherein X is NR5.

6. The process of claim 1, wherein A is phenyl, thienyl or isoxazolyl, each of which may be substituted as specified in claim 1.

7. The process of claim 1, wherein R6 is phenyl or p-methylphenyl.

8. The process of claim 1, wherein the base used in step b) is sodium hydroxide or potassium hydroxide.

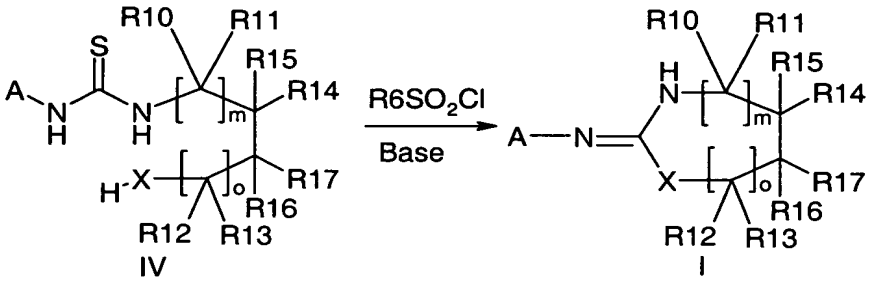
9. A process for preparing a compound of the formula I as defined in claim 1



I

which comprises

converting a thiourea of the formula IV to a compound of formula I using a sulfonyl chloride $R6SO_2Cl$ in the presence of a base



IV I

wherein

A, X, o, m, R6 and R10 to R17 are each as defined in claim 1.